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M. Funck / P. Loosen

## **Estimating the Performance Gain of Selectively Assembled Optical Systems**

Laser marking has evolved to a versatile production technology and a growing market for inexpensive lasers for marking applications is expected. Currently, the assembly of laser systems is largely performed manually, employing adjustable mounts for optical elements. New ways of laser assembly need to be developed in order to stay competitive on the global market, a central aspect being analysed in the Cluster of Excellence “Integrative Production technology for High-Wage countries” [1, 2].

Diode pumped solid state lasers have the potential to be assembled automatically and recently, a robot-assisted assembly of solid state lasers, omitting adjustable mounts and instead directly bonding components to a ceramic substrate has been reported [3]. Using lower quality components selective assembly can be employed to enhance a product's flexibility in terms of fabrication technologies of components or choice of component suppliers while improving product quality [4]. Selective assembly of optical systems has been investigated in the past [5, 6].

A slab laser configuration is especially suitable for automated assembly, as it enables surface mount technologies on a planar substrate. The light of a diode laser bar is homogenized and directed onto a laser crystal with a set of micro optical elements (Figure 2). A centered and normal incidence on the laser crystal is critical, as an asymmetric thermal lens would degrade the beam quality. All optical components will be soldered to a ceramic substrate, prohibiting vertical adjustments. Selective assembly is expected to reduce the centration error even for a small batch production.

The most important parameters are identified with the help of sensitivity and accompanying Monte Carlo analyses of a simplified ray-tracing model. Decentration of both lenses, laser diode bar and laser crystal and a tilt of the second lens impact the quality criterion an order of a magnitude more than any other parameter. The quality criterion is a merit function combining decentration and angle of incidence. Multiple sets

of components with randomly varying parameters are simulated for every element and used to predict the performance of several assembled systems. Every component is used only once and no components are left over. Selective assembly allows selecting the best systems out of all possible permutations, which can be computed for a small number of systems. Figure 1 depicts cumulated probability curves for the worst out of six systems with matched and unmatched components. Thus, for a given probability, all six systems meet or exceed the according value of the merit function. For a limiting merit function of 0.03 selective assembly can raise the yield from about 25 to 90%.

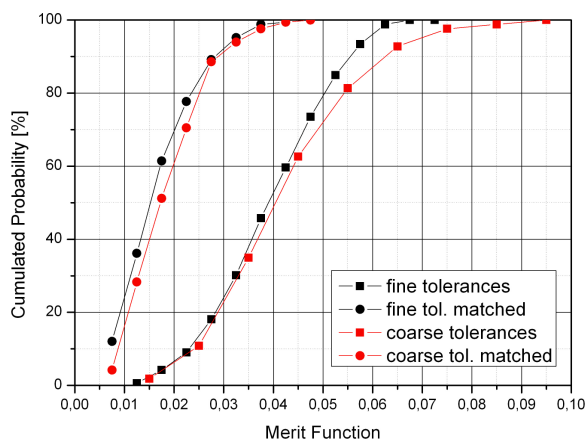


Figure 1: Selective and random assembly of 6 systems

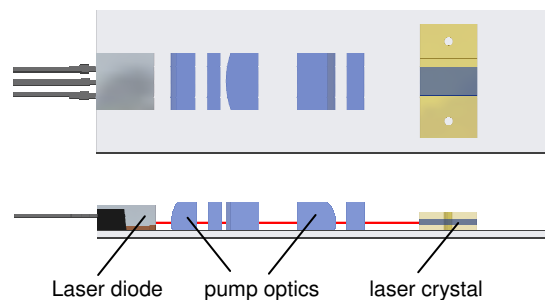


Figure 2: Laser system

Even for a selection of only six systems, a significant improvement has been demonstrated. Whereas coarse tolerances of laser crystal decentration (twice as wide) directly impact random assembly, selective assembly can tolerate larger tolerances without losing much of the gained improvement.

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